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Title: Inscribing the social: Félix Guattari's political ontology of signs

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Keywords: Guattari; signs; semiotics; expression; Hjelmslev

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Inscribing the social: Félix Guattari's political ontology of signs

Timothy Deane-Freeman¹

Abstract

This essay introduces Félix Guattari's semiotics, paying particular attention to the role of "inscription," which he will associate with distribution of and upon the social body. In laying out schematics of exchange and debt in the form of ritual markings and later, of writing, the "signification" of inscription is thus always implicated in projects of social organisation and control of disparate substances of expression. Against, however, these *signifying* semiotics, Guattari will posit *symbolic* semiotics, such as he locates in the worlds of "primitive" ritual, mime and gesture, and *a-signifying* semiotics, which are deployed as chains of information by computers. These semiotics, Guattari argues, remain resolutely dependent on their particular substances of expression, engendering individual and untranslatable worlds which might elude "capture" by dominant forms of social semiotics or inscription. This essay introduces these semiotic categories, arguing that this politics of signs constitutes a strikingly original and often overlooked philosophical intervention.

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Introduction

Why is Félix Guattari emphatic that "one must avoid the semiotic mistake of projecting the idea of 'inscription' onto the word of nature"? (1984, 74). In what follows, I claim that this distinction emerges from his conviction that inscription is always the inscription of an *indebtedness*, such as constitutes the socius in an operation to which nature, or the outside, is indifferent. For Guattari, alone and with Deleuze, all inscription –from the ritual scarifications of "primitive"² peoples, to the hyperactive electronic calculi of globalized markets, and worse, the formulae of literature and philosophy– is the inscription of a *debt*, and all debt signifies the systematic obligations which distribute and determine a particular social body. Nested within this thesis, however, is another claim, that nature cares nothing for these debts, producing "signs" of an altogether different order.

It is this position, and Guattari's orientation towards those errant semiotic zones beyond

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²The inadequacy of the term reflects the inadequacy of all academic writing on pre-colonial and colonised peoples, which inevitably, albeit to differing degrees and with potentially alternate effects, continues the process of colonisation. I have retained this term from Guattari given its complicated status in his work, and given his reception of it from a tradition of radical ethnologists/anthropologists for whom it is anything but pejorative. See, in particular, Clastres 1987.

social inscription, which sets him apart from a contemporaneous linguistic structuralism, and indeed a broader “linguistic turn” which would come to animate 20th century philosophy. In turning to *symbolic semiotics*, as well as *a-signifying* “signs” irreducible to the model of inscription, Guattari gestures towards the continuing possibility of a thought which would be radically uninscribed because futural, or, in the explicit terms of politics, revolutionary. In advancing these claims, I have centralised Guattari’s philosophical contributions –alone, and as they appear in the collaborative work *Anti-Oedipus*, written with Gilles Deleuze. This move is animated by a conviction that the particular emphases of Guattari’s own thought have often been overlooked in favour of the more well-known Deleuze, a situation I hope this piece works in some small way to rectify.

Machinic Ontology

In the section above, I deployed that problematic concept, “nature,” as though, in keeping with a long tradition of anthropocentrism, this author, these inscriptions, *are somehow other than nature*. I also gestured towards Guattari’s determination that we might salvage something from this concept. Certainly, Guattari does not endorse nature as the sublime object of romanticism, nor the source of an esoteric vitalism, such as we might oppose to Anthropos and its technologies of inscription. Indeed, for Guattari, in a model which recurs across his oeuvre, nature itself consists of a particular technology– an intelligent mechanosphere composed of nested and fractal phyla of relations of “machines.” These machines cut, stop and differentiate pure flows of matter or desire, in an operation which includes such autopoietic and creative machineries as societies and solar systems. As Guattari explains, acting as a component in the “four handed” writing machine he forms with Gilles Deleuze: “everywhere it is machines –real ones, not figurative ones: machines driving other machines, machines being driven by other machines, with all the necessary couplings and connections” (2003, 1).

This deployment of the image of the machine emerges from what Guattari had encountered as the profound inadequacy of a psychoanalytic institution steeped in the vocabulary of structuralism, in particular structural linguistics. According to this paradigm, exemplified in the work of Jacques Lacan, the subject emerges within a linguistic “structure” comprised of singularities with no identity beyond that which is derived from their differential relations. A reconciliation of subjectivity to these arbitrary “symbolic” coordinates becomes the task of clinical analysis. For Guattari, however –in a problem encountered in his roles both as a theorist and clinician– this approach appeared to lack an account of the way in which *new* singularities might come to be produced, and, more importantly, a means of precipitating this event, in such a way as might overturn a given structure entirely. Against, therefore, the closed and static world of structuralism, Guattari –in keeping with his revolutionary politics– began to deploy an image of the machine as that which “marks a date, a change, different from a structural representation” (1984, 112).³ In more explicitly Marxist terms, machines, for Guattari, are inherently disruptive of existing relations of production, in a model he will apply to subjectivity in both the theoretical and the clinical contexts.

This “machinic” model of subjectivity, developed across a series of talks and essays throughout

³These themes are first introduced in a 1969 talk prepared by Guattari for the Freudian School in Paris, later published in the journal *Change*, which would serve as the catalyst for Deleuze and Guattari’s initial correspondence.

the late 1960s,⁴ is applied “ontologically” in *Anti-Oedipus* –Guattari’s first collaboration with Deleuze– in which they sketch a reality composed of pure or primary “flows” (or processes) of desire which are “cut” by machines in a model of ontogenesis or individuation *in general*. Here, they explain, “a machine may be defined as a system of interruptions or breaks (*coupures*) [...] related to a continual material flow (*hylè*) that it cuts into” (2003, 36). Each such system constitutes (and is constituted by) a *code*, which the machine has “built into it, stored up inside it” (2003, 38) and which operates as a kind of blueprint or schematic for the particular matters, bodies and individuals which the machine produces by cutting flows. These codes –and we might think here of Guattari’s preferred example, DNA– constitute “signifying chains” (*chaînes signifiantes*) (Deleuze and Guattari 2003, 38) –singularities which are linked in an aleatory and processual fashion, in a model which evokes the unconscious associations encountered in psychoanalysis.

Importantly, the signs that comprise these chains of code are “not themselves signifying,” rather, in their processual syntheses they “produce desire, engineering it in every direction” (Deleuze and Guattari 2003, 39), constituting new individuals, bodies and matters in the broadest, ontological sense. As Guattari explains, in his notes for *Anti-Oedipus*, drawing on the hybrid “wasp-orchid” species to which he and Deleuze will frequently return:

At a point in time –marked, recorded in machinic synchrony– the orchid’s code opens up and absorbs a portion of the wasp’s code. A portion, because the rest continues to be foundational to the wasp’s unvarying structure ... [thus] a new *being* was produced, a new *power*, a new *machine*. (There is no other ‘matter’ than these machinic assemblages marked by genealogical contingency.) (2006, 270).

For Guattari, both before and after the encounter with Deleuze, machines always function in this way, as “differentiator[s]” (1984, 114), which work to produce new individuals.

In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari will refer to this machinic production of singularities as “desiring production” (2003, 29), the operation of an intelligent mechanosphere (or nature) which, in the terms of Deleuze’s Spinozism, desires only its own differential auto-elaboration. And Guattari, as we have seen, is emphatic that the “coding” which takes place at the level of desiring production *in general* is not a form of inscription (1984, 74). Rather, these differential repetitions of code work to form particular matters, processes and bodies in a direct spatial affectivity with no need of translation across qualitatively distinct zones or multiplicities. Certainly, non-semiotic codes can be complex, however, as he explains, “these forms of code formalize the arena of material intensities without recourse to any autonomous or translatable code of inscription” (1984, 74)– a theme to which we will return shortly.

People, meanwhile, also constitute “flows,” and these are also coded, by various “social machines” –initiation ceremonies, pronouns, bodily markings, narratives– such that they come to appear as “individuals” on the social membrane. This latter operation is also one of desiring production, yet in a particular modality or configuration, that of *social production*, which, according to Deleuze and Guattari’s oft-repeated formula, “is purely and simply desiring-production itself under determinate conditions” (2003, 29). The fundamental condition is a fear of pure or decoded flows, a horror of being subsumed by desire which constitutes the *socius*’ neurotic *raison d’être*. “To code desire,” they explain, “and the fear, the anguish of decoded flows

⁴See the collections *Molecular Revolution: Psychiatry and Politics* and *Psychoanalysis and Transversality: Texts and Interviews 1955–1971*.

– is the business of the socius” (2003, 139). To recapitulate: social production is a particular type of desiring–production– that which is animated by a terror of decoded flows or, in other words, the possibility of an uncontrollable desire. These decoded flows threaten constantly to submerge the socius, constituting its simultaneous source and limit. The semiotics of inscription emerge in an attempt to ward off this terrifying spectre.

Debt and Inscription

This latter thesis is advanced throughout a central chapter of *Anti-Oedipus*, “Savages, Barbarians, Civilized Men,” in which Deleuze and Guattari reject a structuralist anthropology which would deny the presence of “history” in so-called primitive societies.⁵ At the same time, they are determined to avoid the “false” history of Hegelian necessity, positing rather a genealogy of contemporary power–formations, which emerge as the product of a series of radical contingences and discontinuities, each marked by the instigation of new forms of social machine. In prosecuting this strange history of contingency, Deleuze and Guattari draw on the typology established by American anthropologist Charles Morgan –subsequently taken up by Engels (Holland 2001, 59)– in order to delineate three social machines, each characterised by different operations of inscription and a different surface upon which this inscription takes place. Importantly, these categories are not intended to be ethnographically accurate, rather, they must read in the context of the book’s fundamental mission –a speculative demonstration of the historical contingency of the Oedipus Complex.

First, there are so called “primitive” or “savage” societies, which deploy, as a surface of inscription, the Earth itself, conceived as “a great ungendered stasis [upon] which the whole process of production is inscribed, on which the forces and means of labour are recorded and the agents and the products distributed” (2003, 141). This deployment of the Earth as surface of inscription determines the resolutely “territorial” character of these societies, such that inscription remains closely wedded to particular “substances of expression,”⁶ which are autochthonous and untranslatable. The paradigmatic such substance –though by no means the only one– is human flesh, which becomes the site of a great theatre of cruelty, of “tattooing, excising, incising, carving, scarifying, mutilating, encircling and initiating...” (2003, 144), in operations which establish relations of indebtedness, obligation and reciprocity between individuals and ultimately the Earth itself.

This account, it must be stressed once more, does not aspire to an ethnographic fidelity. Rather it borrows liberally from Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals*, according to which “man,” far from an innate or natural entity, must be actively produced as a social animal through the inculcation of capacities for memory (and as such, ultimately, for guilt). This writing in naked flesh –which is “enjoyed” by the collective gaze in the context of ritual and initiatory practices– works to produce such a memory, which is always already the memory of a debt and obligation

⁵The primary antagonist in this account is Lévi-Strauss, whose structuralist anthropology, Deleuze and Guattari claim, erroneously takes certain contingent historical phenomena (in particular a socius constituted on the basis of exchange) as universal and a thus a-historical. For more on this, and indeed an important critique of the latent Eurocentrism which nevertheless still animates Deleuze and Guattari’s approach, see Laurie 2012.

⁶This vocabulary emerges from the work of the Danish linguist Louis Hjelmslev, whose pragmatic emphasis on questions of semiotic context, materiality and function, as opposed to the arbitrary, purely differential signs of the Saussurean (structuralist) paradigm, serves as a frequent reference for Guattari, alone and with Deleuze.

to the socius and the Earth. At the same time, these inscriptions produce “a memory of the spoken word” (2003, 145) and as such serve as the condition for language—no longer animal “sounds,” but a circuitry for the dissemination of social hierarchies and attendant obligations. This complex social machinery, Deleuze and Guattari explain, has one essential product: debt – open, mobile and finite blocks of debt: this extraordinary composite of the speaking voice, the marked body, and the enjoying eye [...] the atrocious procedures have only this meaning: to breed man, to mark him in his flesh, to render him capable of alliance, to form him within the debtor creditor relation, which on both sides turns out to be a matter of memory –a memory staining toward the future (2003, 190).

And this debt, indeed, this “memory of the future,” constitutes a solution to the outside –to decoded flows– which are simultaneously captured and denied through these complex systems of reciprocity and equilibrium. In this way primitive inscription sees all bodies localised, all production accounted for, its fruits endlessly redistributed in an operation which “wards off” desiring–production’s tendencies to superfluity and accumulation.

The second social machine is that of the despotic State, which supplants primitive inscription in an altogether singular fashion. Far from replacing the territorial and localised graphisms of primitive inscription, the despotic State preserves them as the circuitries through which its own, relatively abstract power circulates, in an operation of “overcoding” which Deleuze and Guattari will trace into contemporary capitalism. At the heart of this development is a substitution, such that “the full body of the socius has ceased to be the earth, it has become the body of the despot, the despot himself or his god” (2003, 194), in a model which echoes Marx’s “Asiatic mode of production.” This substitution overturns the relative metastability of the primitive socius, which saw debt collectively apportioned in operations which, albeit cruel, took the equilibrium and finitude of indebtedness as their objective. With the new, despotic surface of inscription, however, “all that constituted the essential element of the primitive inscription machine [...] finds itself taken into an immense machinery that renders the debt infinite...” (2003, 192). Debts and obligations which, in other words, ensured reciprocal relations between individuals –as between individuals and the Earth– are thus subordinated to an indebtedness which is fundamentally *asymmetrical*– the infinite debt owed to a despot/god who collects tribute as taxes and who himself owes nothing.

At the same time, primitive *territorial representation* –comprised of vocal and graphic inscriptions which are formally distinct yet “resolved” under the eye of the collective gaze– gives way to a *despotic representation*, which sees graphism aligned upon the voice in a movement attendant to the invention of writing proper (cuneiform, Semitic alphabets). In collecting his tribute and issuing his edicts, the despot can no longer rely on the particular affects of localised territorial signs. Empires require translatable semiotics which can move multilaterally across disparate substances of expression– from wax tablets to vocal proclamation, oral testimony to marks in stone, reaching out to order debts across disparate social groupings, territories and languages. The despot, in other words, effects a coalescence of voice and graphism, which also implicates the eye, whereby “...the voice no longer sings but dictates, decrees; the graphy no longer dances, it ceases to animate bodies, but is set into writing on tablets, stones and books; the eye sets itself to reading” (2003, 205). The eye is thus no longer the organ of an “enjoyment,” rather of “interpretation,” in a development which sets the stage for hermeneutics, literature and psychoanalysis. In this context, Deleuze and Guattari explain, despotic representation replaces

“signs that compose networks of a territorial chain [with] a despotic signifier from which all the signs uniformly flow...” (2003, 206), in a movement which establishes the ultimate authority of an imperial “master signifier.”

While far from an “improvement” –replacing, as it does, a finite cruelty with an infinite terror– the despotic State still succeeds in warding-off the horror of decoded flows, with all remainders of production, all excesses in desire, coalescing in the enjoyment of the despot-god, whose pleasure is to consume them. Deleuze and Guattari’s third social machine however, that of capitalism, is significant in engendering an entirely new relation with these excesses of desiring-production. Here, the despot is replaced, with capital becoming “the full body, the new socius or the quasi cause that appropriates all the productive forces” (2003, 227). The capitalist socius, meanwhile, eschews technologies of inscription centralised on the graphism of writing, in favour of a semiotic liquidity, no less terrifying because animated by an infinite subtlety. “Writing has never been capitalism’s thing,” Deleuze and Guattari explain (2003, 240), rather, under capitalism, inscription reaches a new degree of deterritorialization, even further removed from particular forms or substances of expression, such that:

anything will do: whether it be phonic, graphic, gestural, etc., no flow is privileged in this language, which remains indifferent to its substance or its support inasmuch as the latter is an amorphous continuum (240).

A new, hyper-deterritorialized, “post-semiotic” language thus flows across disparate media, through electronic and telematic networks in an obliviousness to form which saturates semiotics likewise at the level of content –a meme moves across silicone, images and text, from a bedroom to a news story to a political rallying cry with a virtuosity which eschews any particular “signification.”

For Deleuze and Guattari, the magnificent efficiency of this deterritorialized “electronic language,” is ambivalent. Certainly it is commensurate with a virtuosity in the proliferation of debt, from the personal and psychological to the international and intercultural, with contemporary capitalism engaged in a hyperactive production and recording of debts which are stored in ever vaster “banks” or databases. Meanwhile, capitalist subjectivity internalizes the process of inscribing infinite debt (2003, 254), in a mechanism which sees every worker become his or her own boss or conscience– in other words, worst enemy.

At the same time –in keeping with their generalised ontology of machines– Deleuze and Guattari are never naively either techno-optimists or pessimists. The task is always that of tracing the particular effects of a new machinic juncture, mapping the dangers of stratification and reactive forces against potentially revolutionary lines of flight. The unique structure of capitalism –its economic “axiomatic”– offers just such a potentiality, in that it is ultimately indifferent to questions of signification, desiring only production. Capitalism, in other words, unlike other social machines, is “constructed on the basis of decoded flows” (2003, 139) or the elements of a pure desiring production, in a structure which, as Marx well knew, implies the constant risk of a catastrophic self-transcendence.

Indeed the prevention of this catastrophic juncture –the point at which machines no longer simply produce capital but the revolutionary energies (or subjectivities) which might exceed it– requires constant intervention, in particular archaic “reterritorializations” which prevent the free flow of an absolutely deterritorialized desire. In concrete terms – free flowing international capital requires rigorously enclosed human populations, global networks of information exchange require ever-more paranoid nationalisms – all in order to prevent the tipping point at

which capitalist social-production overflows the logics of debt and inscription to become an affair of a pure desiring production, in a development which would deploy semiotic investments of an altogether different order.

Beyond Inscription

Guattari, as I have suggested, is persistent in his claim that the “signs” appropriate to this development –such as might exceed social inscription and open up the territories of a pure desiring production– are already abundant, and should serve as the objects of a renovated semiotics which pushes beyond *Anthropos* and its languages. In the service of this project, Guattari will develop an idiosyncratic “taxonomy” of signs which is recapitulated across several works.⁷ Here, Guattari will bracket as distinct *non-semiotic encodings*, *signifying semiologies* and *a-signifying semiotics*, in a speculative diagram which takes in the “signs” of animals, computers and children. In closing, I will briefly explicate these categories, suggesting the ways in which each might elude “capture” by the hegemonic semiotics of social inscription, perhaps thus pushing us towards desiring-production, which is to say, the production of altogether new ways of living.

Non-semiotic coding, as we have seen, constitutes a “nature” or “desire” which is ontologically “prior” to social inscription, and which is resolutely wedded to particular material processes. Guattari’s preferred example is DNA, however we might likewise refer to “codes” which determine the structure of natural phenomena from pebbles to galaxies. Non-semiotic codes, indeed, in their fundamental guise as differential repetitions, can attain a dazzling complexity, deploying redundancies and immanent mutations in such a way as to self-transcend and exploit new territorial possibilities. In this sense, Guattari will speak of a certain machinic “creativity,” or even “freedom” (2011, 127) animating natural encoding, which is indifferent to the questions of obligation or indebtedness constitutive of social production. In other words, we are in the realm of a “materialism,” in the properly Marxist sense, where immanent, autonomous machineries are capable of overturning even the most apparently irrevocable symbolic orders– the complex interaction of biospheric codes which sees a crop fail and famine become revolution.

Next, Guattari locates “semiotics” proper. Important, however, is his subdivision of this category, such that he will render as distinct *symbolic semiologies* and *semiologies of signification*. Guattari associates the first of these categories with so-called primitive societies, as with the “worlds” of childhood and madness. Importantly, “these bring various types of substance into play...” including “semiotics of gesture, of mime, of posture...” (1984, 74), in a social play which, in the primitive configuration, still includes inscription on the body. Guattari will also identify symbolic semiotics in the animal world, such as in the mating rituals of certain finches, or, in an example to which he and Deleuze frequently return, the stylised performances of the tooth-billed bower bird or stagemaker. In other words, these are semiotics which are rigorously localised in particular substances of expression or territories, and which, when they do pertain to social inscription, distribute a debt which remains finite and reciprocal. Signs on this register,

⁷Guattari sketches out his semiotic “categories” in several places, and while some of the particulars change the overall structure is relatively consistent. In this piece I have primarily drawn on his explication in the 1973 lecture “The role of the signifier in the institution,” transcribed in *Molecular Revolution* (1984, 74–75). These distinctions, however, are also laid out in *The Machinic Unconscious* (2011, 20–21), *Chaosmosis* (1995, 48–49), and, in a somewhat altered form, in the fifth “plateau” of *A Thousand Plateaus* (2009, 111–120).

Guattari explains, “can never be fully translated into any universal system of signification [and] therefore preserve a certain autonomous territoriality that corresponds to a specific type of *jouissance*” (1984, 74).

The second of these categories is where we have located the “dictatorship of the signifier” (1984, 75), such as persists into contemporary psychoanalysis and structuralist philosophy. These are signs which are relatively indifferent to particular territories or substances of expression, and emerge alongside the “writing machines as a basic tool for the great despotic empires” (1984, 75). We have already seen how these semiotics render debt or social obligation infinite, in a movement which turns the eye to reading and sees thought become the act of an interpretation which is “interminable.” Alongside, however, this function of inscribing debt, it is clear that these semiotics can be put to alternate uses, as in certain experiments with science, literature and philosophy.

Guattari’s favourite example here –the subject of a lengthy discussion in the latter stages of *The Machinic Unconscious*– is Proust, who deploys writing in the construction of “a prodigious rhizomatic map” (2011, 231), which, in its polyvocality, overflows logics of social inscription. Proust, Guattari argues, uses his writing to trace particular machinic processes –what he will here dub “existential refrains”– across what are habitually encountered as incommensurable dimensions of reality. Thus, in the *Recherche*, the composer Vinteuil’s “little phrase” migrates across subjectivities, animating human and non-human bodies, producing shifts in narrative and ultimately escaping transversally into Guattari’s own meta-textual commentary in an amorphousness which actively subverts interpretation. Rather than “signifying” in any particular way, this machinic semiotic “emits its own opinions” (2011, 235) in a creative production of multilateral affects made possible by the polyvocal ecology of the Proustian rhizome. This operation, which is open to literature once it eschews all representational aspirations, is likewise that which animates Guattari’s own philosophy– a sly redeployment of technologies of inscription, which sees them tentatively open onto the forces of pure desiring production.

Finally, there are *a-signifying semiotics*, which Guattari will link with machines understood in the everyday sense, as human made technical objects, in particular those of the so called “information revolution.” Such machines are “semiotic,” in the sense of deploying chains of symbols (numbers, texts, algorithms), however they do so without interpretation, eschewing human “readers” in favour of a direct procedural affectivity reminiscent of non-semiotic coding. Here, “the machine speaks to the machine before speaking to man and the ontological domains that it reveals and secretes are, on each occasion, singular and precarious” (1995, 47). The sheer complexity, in other words, of a relatively autonomous post-semiotic mechanosphere suggests an immense potential for productivity in excess of capitalist mechanisms of reterritorialization, paving the way for a globalized “resingularisation” which is the subject of Guattari’s final monograph, 1992’s *Chaosmosis*. Here, Guattari writes, with no small prescience:

There exists an anti-modernist attitude which involves a massive rejection of technological innovation, particularly as it concerns the information revolution. It’s impossible to judge such a machinic evolution either positively or negatively; everything depends on its articulation within collective assemblages of enunciation. At best there is the creation, or invention, of new Universes; at worst there is the deadening influence of the mass media to which millions of individuals are currently condemned (1995, 5).

In short, the new semiotic investments which information processors and telematic networks

engender are neither “good” nor “bad” but rather immensely *productive*. What is required, Guattari claims, are therefore critical, analytic and political projects which might inveigh in such a way as to identify their creative, emancipatory and even revolutionary potentialities while ruthlessly diagnosing tendencies towards reaction. Guattari’s philosophy, indeed, intervenes at just this point, attempting, in its own small way, to provide us with a conceptual vocabulary which might help in forging these distinctions. Whether or not it succeeds depends upon the machines –which is to say the readers– with which it is able to connect, a conviction animating the present intervention.

Conclusions

The possibility of “signs” which are *not* inscribed indicates the possibility of an expression which is not that of a debt, and as such, of a thought derived from no actually existing political order. This does not imply, of course, that we should simply “give up writing,” as though this were enough to escape the web of debts which define us. Rather what is required is a mapping of those affects which animate and problematise a given semiotic, both from without and from within, in a series of critical dislocations which might render it polyvocal and ambiguous. Guattari identifies such forces at work in the Proustian Universe and the autonomies of information technology, as in the unique semiotic worlds of childhood or madness.

We might likewise identify these operations at work in Guattari’s own philosophy, which, we should carefully note, has often been obscured in subsequent scholarship by the “master signifier” Deleuze. In this marginal space, where words “mean” different things –which is to say work differently– and where signs are no longer arbitrary but the concrete parts of ontogenetic machineries, we encounter a concerted project to escape the closed logic of semiotic investments which take themselves as universal. Rather, Guattari wants to open a crack in structure, to let a little light in, allowing for a thought oriented towards the Real in all of its contingent multiplicity. Such a thought, a thought from outside, has never been more necessary.

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